



ANG

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Editorial

Using violence and deception to remain in power

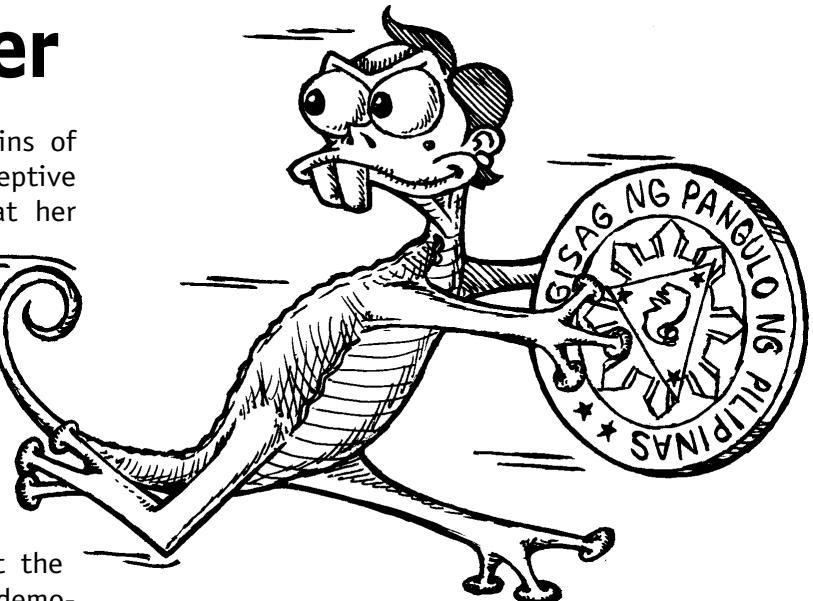
Gloria Arroyo tightens her grip on the reins of power through incessant bloody and deceptive maneuvers using all state instruments at her disposal as well as other overt and covert methods.

The regime has simultaneous schemes to dupe the people and crush, if not buy out, all those who might protest against Arroyo's enduring ambition to stay longer in power and to loot, along with her foreign and local partners in crime, whatever resources her bankrupt regime may lay its hands on.

The fascist campaign is primarily aimed at the revolutionary armed movement and the legal democratic forces who are at the forefront of the struggle to oust Arroyo. Numerous military abuses are committed in the countryside, town centers and cities to sow terror among the people. Arroyo's death squads continue to abduct and kill progressive and militant forces. Arroyo and her fascist cohorts' criminal responsibility cannot be covered up even by the Melo Commission which was formed supposedly to investigate the killings of activists and journalists.

The regime continues to use EO 464 and its corollary Memorandum Circular 108 to block the Senate and the Commission on Human Rights in their independent investigations into the political killings.

Lately, the regime has been peddling its invented tale about the discovery in Leyte of supposed mass graves containing the remains of the victims of an internal purge by the NPA. The regime is malevolently



trying to shift the blame for the political assassinations to the NPA. This dastardly intrigue also seeks to link as one the legal party Bayan Muna and the underground NDFP, hunt down the leading personalities of these organizations and simultaneously demonize and isolate them from the people. This demolition job also intends to exclude progressive parties from the parliamentary arena and terrorize their mass members, supporters and allies.

Malacañang is doing its utmost to link the broad front of various anti-Arroyo oppositionists to the CPP and NPA by using the old canard that these forces are working together to foment destabilization.

Malacañang is pushing the legislature to approve the anti-terrorism bill long demanded by Arroyo and her master US President George Bush to further intensify and give legal sanction to the regime's continuing

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violations of human rights and its blatant fascist measures. This includes counting as terrorist crimes rallies and other activities criticizing the government; warrantless arrests and detention without charges filed within 72 hours; telephone and cellphone surveillance and many more. Malacañang is pushing for a regulation requiring all users to register their cellphones and SIM packs as part of the plan for broader surveillance of cellphones.

Malacañang recently issued Executive Order 420 establishing the Unified Multipurpose Identification scheme ostensibly to unify all ID requirements for transacting with various government agencies, when in fact this is a preparatory step towards a National ID system.

Government will then have the means to watch and control the movement of individuals, especially those seen as enemies of the state. The harsh and threatening manner by which the 7th ID requires the people of Nueva Ecija, Bulacan, Pampanga, Aurora and other provinces of Central Luzon to carry *cedulas* (residence certificates) is another preparatory step towards a

National ID system.

Charter Change (Chacha) is Malacañang's broad and long-running maneuver to provide legal justification for Arroyo's extended stay in power, blatant fascist repression and US imperialist intervention into the Philippines' sovereign territory and its economic, political, military and other internal issues. Chacha will sanction the regime's longstanding agenda of changing the form of government to prolong Arroyo's illegitimate hold on power, crack down on civil liberties, limit protection of democratic rights and make it easier for the regime to declare martial law and a state of national emergency and suspend the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus. In return for continuing US support, all remaining provisions protecting national sovereignty and patrimony and against the armed intervention of imperialist powers will be deleted

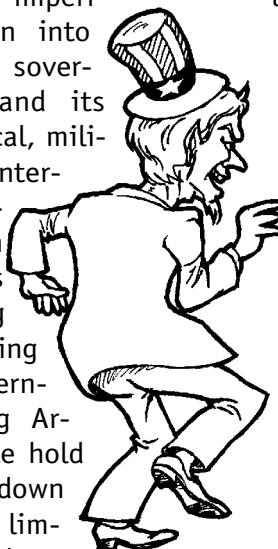
from the current reactionary constitution.

Malacañang and its accomplices in the Supreme Court and the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) are now paving the way for the approval of the sham "people's initiative" for Chacha. COMELEC made a show of refusing the people's initiative when in fact it found a way to quickly pass on to the Supreme Court the petition of Sigaw ng Bayan and the Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines (ULAP) to circumvent possible protests that would prolong the process, especially since there were numerous anomalies in the solicitation of signatures.

While the COMELEC avoided issuing a statement openly favoring the petition, it commented that Sigaw ng Bayan seemed to have complied with the requisites stipulated by law for soliciting signatures. The COMELEC made the comment without even examining the veracity of the signatures.

Malacañang controls a significant number of judges in the Supreme Court whom it expects to overrule the court's previous decision against the "people's initiative." Thus, the referendum can be held even before the 2007 election. Malacañang is also launching a drive to garner the requisite numbers to transform Congress into a constituent assembly that can change the constitution even if this violates the provision requiring separate Senate approval.

As with the barefaced scrapping of the impeachment complaint, the Arroyo regime has absolutely no qualms in crushing, distorting and circumventing all legal processes if



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only to fulfill its greed for power.

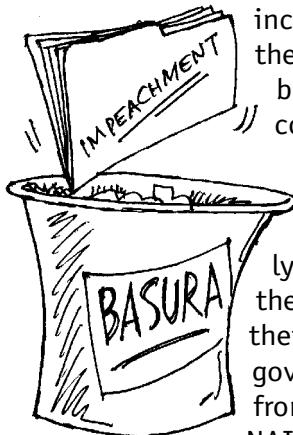
It was the lust for power and the privileges that go with it that pushed the Marcos regime in the 1970s to impose open fascist rule, monopolize political power and change the reactionary constitution to support such an agenda. This is the same path being taken by the Arroyo regime, and it will ultimately meet the same fate. As with the time of Marcos, Arroyo's schemes are teaching the people the correctness and necessity of forging unity for armed revolution and open mass struggle until decisive victory is achieved. As with Marcos, Arroyo will be overthrown by the mighty force of an angered nation. **AB**

It does not end with the impeachment

Arroyo's loyal henchmen may have killed the impeachment complaint in Congress, but in the streets a vigorous people's movement is working to expose the truth.

Various groups recently launched a caravan for truth and justice. The caravan will bring to different places the seven boxes containing evidence of Arroyo's cheating, corruption, and murderous rampage. This is their response to the people's clamor for truth, especially since the regime has shut all avenues for constitutional struggle.

It will be recalled that pro-Arroyo congressmen blocked the opening of the boxes containing evidence of Arroyo's crimes. This includes evidence showing that the Arroyo family has a secret bank account in Germany containing several hundred millions of dollars. According to Rep. Allan Peter Cayetano, the Arroyo family hides in such bank accounts the funds they steal through their illegal control of local government budgets, kickbacks from public works such as the NAIA-3 and Northrail projects and bribes from criminal activities such as jueteng. The said bank account is just one among the long list of properties concealed by the Arroyo family. As expected, the Arroyos refused to be subjected to investigation and instead called for Cayetano's expulsion from Congress and threatened him with libel charges.



Melo Commission

An apologist for the Arroyo regime

Gloria Arroyo singlehandedly finished the task assigned to Malacañang's Melo Commission on its first day of work. In a statement last August 31, Arroyo absolved herself and the military and police from any criminal responsibility for the murder of more than 740 activists and media personnel critical of her regime. She said the crimes imputed to the police and military are inventions of the political opposition and their Leftist accomplices in an effort to destabilize her regime.

This underscores again the truth that Arroyo created the Melo Commission to absolve her and her fascist minions and to shift the blame to the victims themselves and to a few lowly military and police elements and their lumpen underlings or to other innocent persons.

This goes against the commission's declared task to investigate the widespread political killings.

Retired Associate Justice Jose Melo, commission head, parroted Arroyo's line and declared as credible the report of Maj. Gen. Avelino Razon of PNP-Task Force Usig that the majority of the political killings were done by the Leftists themselves. Task Force Usig claims that the NPA killed Sotero Llamas, former head of the CPP-NPA in Bicol, and known progressive personalities in Eastern Visayas such as Atty. Feledito Dacut, Rev. Peter Edison Lapuz and Paquito "Pax" Diaz.

Melo also declared that it is the police who are responsible for unmasking the criminals behind the abductions and killings. He added that the commission's objective is simply to determine why such killings have been happening.

The lameduck commission will be wasting its time pondering on various speculations as it allows the perpetrators to investigate themselves. The commission's announcement that "there would be no sacred cows" in its investigations is turning out to be nothing more than hot air. **AB**

AFP concocts tale of mass graves in Leyte

The AFP's mouthpieces continue with their prattle about the discovery of supposed mass graves in Inopacan, Leyte containing the remains of victims of an internal purge in the NPA during the 1980s. Malacañang and the AFP are truly desperate to create a bigger ruckus, the better to drown out widespread local and international condemnation of their fascist and terrorist campaign of repression against the Filipino people.

Charges of murder were immediately filed against Comrades Jose Maria Sison and Luis Jalandoni and Congressman Satur Ocampo, even if no scientific study has yet been done on the bones allegedly dug up from the supposed mass graves. The AFP ridiculously claims having a witness who saw a document signed by Amado Guererro (former nom de guerre of Comrade Joema), "Ka Satur" and "Ka Louie" ordering the execution of the military's deep penetration agents. The AFP stupidly forgot that Comrade Joema was imprisoned in Fort Bonifacio from 1977-1986, while Ocampo was in prison from 1975-1985. Jalandoni has been living in Europe since the latter part of the 1970s.

This tale is just the latest in a series of stories concocted by the AFP to malign the CPP and NPA. The AFP has dug up several alleged mass graves in Southern Tagalog over the past few years, but not once has it submitted the evidence for scientific analysis. This year, National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales announced the discovery of a mass grave in San Fernando, Bukidnon. His story was belied not only by the governor of Bukidnon, but by military officials in the province. **AB**



AFP running amok

Nothing has come of the Arroyo regime's pronouncements and promises to protect the rights and liberties of each citizen. Arroyo's armed minions in the PNP, AFP and other armed instruments of the state continue with their murderous frenzy. The following events prove the regime's hypocrisy:

September 5. Elements of Task Force Bulacan illegally arrested Remedios, Joynes and Vangie San Juan in their home in Barangay Atlag, Malolos City. The victims are relatives of former Karapatan volunteer Dory San Juan, whom the soldiers were hunting down. Remedios, Joynes and Vangie were arrested and detained in the village's military detachment when the military failed to find Dory in the house.

Meanwhile, soldiers broke into the Tanglaw sa Dagat Multi-Purpose Cooperative, ransacked the premises and stole goods worth about ₱10,000.00. The cooperative, established with assistance from Pamalakaya and Anakpawis, has been branded an NPA project. The soldiers also stole a fiberglass fishing boat worth ₱125,190.00.

September 4. Candelario Magallanes Ayuda, 42, member of Bayan Muna was killed in Valencia City, Bukidnon.

Meanwhile, Anakbayan organizers Aprilyn Perido, 24 and Eloisa Tukay, 35 were illegally arrested in Cabanatuan City. They were brought to the PNP Provincial Headquarters in Cabanatuan but the PNP refuses to confirm that the victims are in their custody.

Perido was one of several witnesses against the military in the Commission on Human Rights hearing held August 24 in Angeles City.

Earlier, four masked men abducted Gerry Martinez, 53 and Cesar Salamat, 70 from their homes in Sityo Mindanao, Barangay Sto. Rosario, Malolos City. Martinez and Salamat are members of the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN).

September 3. Jovito Pinakilid was killed by death squad elements aboard a motorcycle in Simbalan, Buenavista, Agusan del Norte. Pinakilid led the Pigbawangan Higaonon Pangibasok.

September 1. Two men aboard a motorcycle killed Sanito Bargamento, National Federation of Sugar Workers (NFSW) organizer and brother of NFSW auditor Edwin Bargamento who was killed in 2005. Sanito was aboard a van with his wife when he was sprayed with bullets in Barangay Tortosa, Manapla, Negros Occidental. He is the 13th activist slain in Negros since 2005.

That same day, the PNP illegally arrested George Lavadia, 32 and Sharon Abangan, 33 in Talisay City, Cebu on suspicion that they were NPA guerrillas. Lavadia was former spokesperson of the Estrada Resign Movement while Abangan was a campaign manager of the Anakpawis partylist organization.

August 30. Soldiers under Task Force Bulacan abducted couple Napoleon and Ofelia Bautista, both members of Pamalakaya and Anakpawis. The victims, who worked as caretakers of a fishpond were abducted from their hut in Barangay San Roque, Hagonoy, Bulacan. Ofelia was severely tor-





tured but released the next day. Napoleon is still missing.

Meanwhile, five residents of Sityo Masagana, Barangay Western Bicutan, Taguig City were injured by a water cannon used by Philippine Army elements assigned to demolish 106 homes in the area. Malacañang called off the demolition due to intense opposition from the residents.

August 27. PNP elements arrested Jariz Vida, Camarines Sur provincial secretary-general of Bayan Muna. Jariz, who was picked up in Barangay Baras, Canaman had just finished his radio program over station DZGE when he was arrested on a trumped-up charge of frustrated murder.

August 22. Eight members of Karapatan-Southern Tagalog were illegally arrested and detained by soldiers of the 74th IB in Barangay Tagbacan Ibaba, Catanauan, Quezon. Mary Jane Almoete, Christopher de Leon, Kristina Mae Guray, Virgilio Tulay, Ramon Lastique, Leonardo de Dios, Luna de Dios and an unidentified companion were arrested while trying to help retrieve the remains of Racquel Aumentado, a Red fighter and cultural cadre slain in an encounter between the 74th IB and the NPA in Catanauan last August 18. The victims were also in the area to investigate a reported case of maltreatment of peasants Binoy and Jeffrey Amorcillo and Armon Rogelio by the soldiers. The eight have been charged with sedition and are still detained.

August 20. Death squad elements killed Hermelino Marqueza in Barangay Maitum, Tandag, Surigao del Sur at around 11:00 p.m. Marqueza was leader of the Kapunongan sa Mag-uuma sa Surigao, an affiliate organization of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas. He was the sixth activist leader to be slain in the

Target: Children

Military abuses in Samar

About 120 children fell victim to military abuses in May-June 2006 in the barangays of Quirino, Imelda and San Francisco in Las Navas, Northern Samar. They are among 288 victims in 55 cases of military violence documented by Pesante and Katungod-Northern Samar in a fact-finding mission last July 24-28.

The fact-finding mission unearthed cases of arbitrary detention, attempted murder, destruction of property, harrassment and intimidation, abduction, manhandling, strafing, torture and many more.

Among the victims is Marlon Parane, 12, whom two soldiers threatened to kill last July 5. Marlon's elder sister, who recently delivered a baby, was interrogated and accused of being an NPA guerrilla.

The perpetrators are elements of the 63rd IB under Col. Felimon Santos. This unit is encamped in Barangay Opong in the adjacent town of Catubig. The soldiers' abuses intensified after their attack on an NPA camp in Barangay Imelda last July 6. Four soldiers and two guerrillas died in the attack.

Fifty of the 55 documented cases of military abuse happened after the incident. These include the forcible evacuation of 204 residents of Barangay Imelda and Barangay Quirino. The mother and month old nephew of Marlon Parane were arrested in relation to the military attack. The military initially bragged that they had captured two Red fighters, failing to mention that one was a grandmother and the other an infant.

Militarization has worsened the livelihoods of the farmers who cannot tend to their farms for fear of being beaten by the soldiers. Katungod pointed to the case of the Norcio clan in Barangay Quirino who fled their homes and farms after being interrogated and accused as NPA guerrillas by the military. They now work as sharecrollers in the farms of their relatives in other barangays.

According to Katungod, human rights violations are rampant in Eastern Visayas. Aside from these cases, they have also documented 42 cases of military abuses victimizing 4,203 people in the region from January-June 2006.

AB

Caraga Region this year. Marqueza was killed just a few hours after Arroyo announced her creation of the Melo Commission to investigate the killings of activists and journalists.

August 6. Five peasants arrested in Tagaytay last April 28 on charges of rebellion spent their 100th day in jail. According to the detainees, they suffer psychological torture daily as visiting schedules of their relatives are arbitrarily changed, visiting hours are suddenly cut and visitors

are refused entry. Aristedes Sarmiento, Enrico Ybañez, Alejandro Axel Pinpin, Riel Custodio and Michael Masayes also called the "Tagaytay 5" were held incommunicado, interrogated, and tortured in a safehouse for four days. They were presented to the media last May 1 as NPA guerrillas who allegedly planned to plant bombs in Metro Manila to disrupt the Labor Day celebrations. Sarmiento, Pinpin and Custodio are members of the Kalipunan ng mga Magbubukid

Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan, Jr:

A craven fascist criminal

Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan's retirement on September 11 will highlight his extremely bloody record of killing, abduction and other forms of brutality committed against unarmed civilians. The event will also highlight his failure to crush the revolutionary armed movement in Central Luzon, Eastern Visayas and Mindoro where he was assigned and where he has sowed fascist terror since 2001.

According to records of Karapatan, 136 or 64% of the 212 cases of human rights abuses in Central Luzon from February 2001 occurred in the past 11 months when General Palparan assumed command of the Philippine Army's 7th Infantry Division. These include 71 cases of murder, five massacres, 14 cases of frustrated murder and 46 cases of abduction.

Majority of the abuses were committed by Palparan's fascist forces in the provinces of Bulacan, Pampanga and Nueva Ecija where the 7th ID concentrated its bloody campaign to eradicate the revolutionary movement's mass support base. Many areas here are now under a state of undeclared martial law, where the AFP lords it over and terrorizes the citizens. Anyone caught without a *cedula* is beaten, abused and intimidated.

Palparan is known to have masterminded killings and abductions, among them the murder of Ricardo Valmocina and two others in San Ildefonso, Bulacan last February 1, and the gruesome abduction and murder of husband and wife Marivel and Danilo Supeña last October 26, 2005. Both were Bayan Muna members. Marivel was four months pregnant. Their decomposing bodies were found trussed inside sacks in San Jose City, Nueva Ecija.

Last January 16, peasant leader Ofelia "Nanay Perla" Rodriguez, 61, was ruthlessly killed in her home in Mexico, Pampanga while she was cradling her infant grandchild.

General Palparan also masterminded the abduction of UP students Karen Empeño and Sherlyn Cadapan and farmer Manuel Merino in Hagonoy, Bulacan last June 25.

Eastern Visayas: Before his assignment to Central Luzon, Palparan sowed terror in Eastern Visayas as head of the 8th ID from February-August 2005. Over the course of eight months, 7,250 individuals, 5,223 families and 141 communities became victims of fascist militarization. From February-May 2005, 22 leaders and members of progressive organizations and parties were killed. In the first five months of Palparan's tenure as 8th ID commander, human rights violations surged by 600% compared to the whole of 2004.

Among Palparan's most gruesome crimes are the killing of progressive regional mass leaders such as Rev. Peter Edison Lapuz, regional coordinator of Katungod-Sinirangan Bisaya and member of the regional council of the Promotion of Church People's Response (PCPR)-Eastern Visayas who was killed in San Isidro, Leyte last May 12, 2005 with peasant leader Alfredo Malinao; and Atty. Feledito Dacut, Bayan Muna regional coordinator who was killed in Tacloban City last March 24, 2005. According to a police investigation, men of the 8th ID were seen loitering around the spot where Attorney Dacut was killed. Leo Bagares, Ba-



yan Muna vice chairperson for Eastern Visayas was ambushed and wounded in Sulangan, Guiuan, Eastern Samar. Fr. Allan Caparro of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente and PCPR-EV vice chairperson, and his wife Aileen were wounded when they were sprayed with bullets in Abuyog, Leyte last February 18, 2005.

Numerous communities and farms have been destroyed. Thousands have been displaced by the bombings and brutal military operations of Palparan's troops in

Eastern Visayas. Among the places bombed by Philippine Air Force helicopters on April 16, 19 and 20 2005 are several communities of Catarman and Pambujan in Northern Samar, and Calbayog City, Samar

Children are not safe from the fascist abuses of Palparan's troops. On May 3, 2005, soldiers burned the genitals of three children in Matuguinao, Western Samar who refused to reveal the whereabouts of their parents. On March 31, 2005 three children aged eight, seven and five years and their parents were abducted by troops of the 34th IB in Catbalogan, Samar.

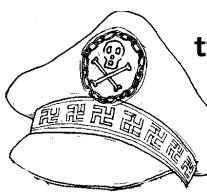
Palparan's bloody record. Palparan rose to national prominence as a fascist executioner when he assumed command of the 204th Bde and launched widespread brutal operations in the island of Mindoro from 2001 to 2004. On October 1, 2001, a few months after she assumed the presidency, Arroyo made a personal visit to Mindoro to praise, endorse and encourage Palparan's brutality. Karapatan has documented 326 cases of human

rights violations in the island. Twenty-seven activists have been killed in Mindoro. The most deplorable case involved the abduction, torture and gruesome summary execution in April 2003 of Eden Marcellana, secretary-general of Karapatan-Southern Tagalog and Ka Eddie Gumanoy, chairperson of Kasama-TK, a regional peasant organization. Palparan is also the brains behind the brutal murder of Vice Mayor Juvy Magsino of Naujan, Oriental Mindoro in 2004.

As head of Task Force Banahaw in 2001, Palparan was responsible for 61 cases of human rights violations in Laguna.

Palparan was assigned to Mountain Province in 1992 where he was responsible for six cases of illegal arrest, five cases of harassment, one case of abduction, one case of summary execution, one case of physical injury and two cases of forcible evacuation.

When he was commander of the 24th IB from 1987 to 1991 in Pampanga and Bataan, he ordered illegal arrests, detentions, torture and forcible evacuations and destroyed the lives of many activists, members of progressive organizations and ordinary citizens. He also formed vigilante groups in Pampanga that became involved in summary executions, torture and other crimes. Their victims included human rights advocates.



A coward and a failure in combatting the NPA. General Palparan incessantly brags that the AFP has victoriously eradicated NPA support in the towns in Bulacan, Nueva Ecija and Pampanga.

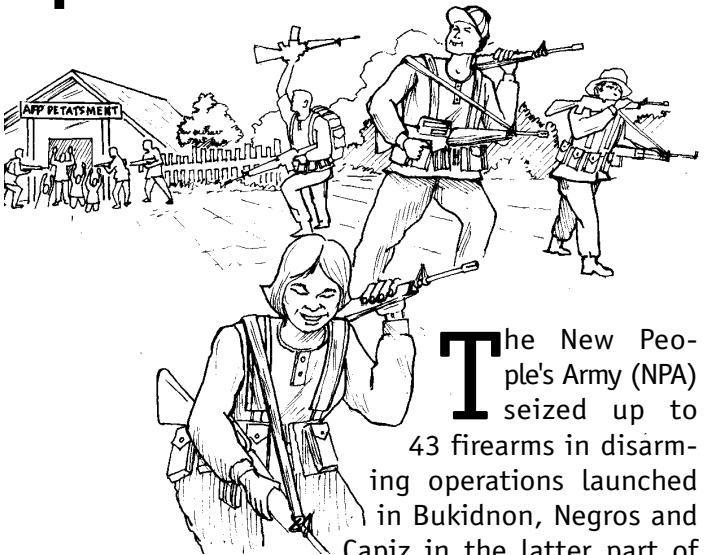
His braggadocio is belied by the fact that he has nothing to show by way of any military victory against the NPA. Because it is terrified of the NPA guerrillas who are capable of defending themselves, the AFP instead targets peasant, fisherfolk and workers' communities where it conducts zoning operations, intimidates those who could not procure and carry *cedulas* and abducts and kills activists. Palparan has never led an actual military operation against the NPA.

The Filipino masses loathe Palparan for his brutality. The AFP's brutal attacks are educating the masses on the correctness and necessity of rising up in arms. More volunteers are joining the NPA to see justice done and punish the fascist criminals.

Even after his retirement from the AFP, the Filipino masses will hound Palparan and see to it that he pays for all of his blood debts. Revolutionary justice will be meted upon him wherever he might be. The revolutionary movement has judged Palparan and his master Gloria Arroyo as among the most brutal fascist criminals who succeeded only in fanning the flames of revolutionary fervor among the Filipino people. AB



NPA seizes 43 firearms in disarming operations



The New People's Army (NPA) seized up to 43 firearms in disarming operations launched in Bukidnon, Negros and Capiz in the latter part of August. The Communist Party of the Philippines commended the NPA units for these victories and called on other units nationwide to intensify guerrilla warfare to seize more weapons to arm the growing number of NPA recruits.

In Bukidnon. Most striking among these disarming operations was an attack by the NPA Ernesto Roa Command on the 72nd IB-CAFGU patrol base in Barangay Boco, Banlag, Valencia City on August 22 that yielded 30 firearms. The NPA seized 15 M14s, 10 Garands, two M16s, two carbines and a .45 cal pistol.

NDF-North Central Mindanao (NCMR) spokesperson Ka Cesar Renerio said the attack was conducted 11:30 in the evening. Two of the 15 CAFGU elements at the detachment fought back but quickly surrendered their weapons after being wounded. The 13 other CAFGU elements who were asleep and taken by surprise likewise surrendered soon after. The 72nd IB's cadreman was killed, however, when the Red fighters were forced to fire at him as he tried to get his firearm.

The spokesperson also reported that NPA units in NCMR launched eight other successful tactical offensives in the form of raids and harassment operations from July to August in Bukidnon, Misamis Oriental and Agusan del Sur resulting in the death of four soldiers and three CAFGU elements and the wounding of



three other soldiers.

In Capiz. That same day, the NPA seized five firearms of various caliber in Barangay Bungsuan, Dumaraao. Members of the NPA Nonito Aguirre Sr. Command posed as military personnel to be able to get inside the house of Barangay Bungsuan's village chair and introduced themselves as Red fighters once they got in. They quickly seized two M16s, an M14, a carbine, a .45 cal pistol and ammunition from the arsenal of the barangay chairman's son who is a PNP official.

In Negros. A seven-strong NPA unit attacked the Tarlii Mining Company in Barangay Tilim, Calatrava on August 29 and seized wea-

pons from its armed guards. The NPA confiscated two .38 cal revolvers and a 12-gauge shotgun. One of those disarmed was the Calatrava police chief who moonlights as a security guard at the mining company.

Earlier, an NPA platoon hauled away five firearms from Toboso town in a disarming operation last August 21. Nine Red fighters attacked the Salamanca Barangay Hall that also served as the Bantay Dagat headquarters. The NPA seized a Thompson submachine gun, a carbine and an ICOM base radio. Simultaneous raids were also conducted by other guerrillas on the houses of Task Force Bantay

Dagat members, yielding another M16 with six magazines, an M14 and a shotgun.

Ka Bayani Obrero, spokesperson of the NPA-Boy Gatmaitan Command in Negros said the disarming operation against Bantay Dagat elements was in response to demands from small fisherfolk the former had victimized. He said that just last June, a year old child was killed when Bantay Dagat members went on a shooting spree. These paramilitary forces who pose as defenders of the environment are actually pirates who prey on small fisherfolk off the shores of Toboso and its neighboring towns. AB

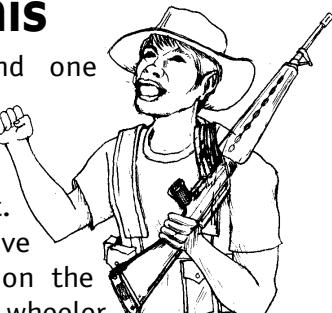
Military actions in Agusan, Quezon and Misamis

Eight soldiers were killed and one wounded in separate armed actions launched by NPA Red fighters in Agusan del Sur, Misamis Oriental and Quezon in August.

In Agusan del Sur. At least five government soldiers were killed on the spot last August 25 after the six-wheeler truck they were riding was hit by a land mine and sprayed with bullets in an ambush in Barangay Mardon, Talacogon. The fighting, which began 12:30 noon lasted about an hour after survivors from the 12-man military team resisted. The Red fighters retreated when the military reinforcements arrived.

In Quezon. Two soldiers from a Reengineered Special Operations Team (RSOT) were killed in an ambush by members of the NPA Maria Theresa de Leon Command in Sitio Matalahan, San Vicente last August 26. One other soldier was wounded. The troops had just brought five Red fighters who had allegedly surrendered to their main camp when they were ambushed on their way back to their unit that was then conducting civil-military operations in San Vicente.

In Misamis Oriental. A soldier from the 8th IB was killed when he fell off a cliff after being hit by an NPA sniper's bullet last August 22 in Sapa ng Maayan, Bantawan, Gingoog City. The soldiers were on patrol when they encountered an NPA platoon at around 6:00 p.m. AB



Sniping, harassment in Far South Mindanao Region

At least seven Philippine Army soldiers and CAFGU elements were killed in sniping and harassment operations by guerrillas under the NPA Valentin Palamine Command (VPC) in Far South Mindanao Region (FSMR) last July.



In a statement, the VPC said that an undetermined number of 66th IB and CAFGU elements were killed in a sniping operation by combined forces of Front 74 and Front 76 in Sitio Sultana, Barangay Dongan Pikong, Matanao, Davao del Sur last July 20. The casualties were retrieved by a military ambulance and an AFP helicopter.

On the other hand, four soldiers from the 1st Division Reconnaissance Company (DRC) were killed in a sniping operation by people's guerrillas of Front 76 last July 17 at around

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Hold Petron, Sunshine Maritime and the Arroyo government accountable for the Guimaras oil spill

Petron Corporation, Sunshine Maritime Development Corporation (SMDC) and the Arroyo government must be held accountable for their criminal responsibility in the oil spill along the Iloilo-Guimaras Strait that has not only caused serious destruction to the sea but has dealt severe damage to the health and livelihood of tens of thousands of fisherfolk and other residents of Guimaras and neighboring islands.

Destruction wrought by the oil spill

An estimated 300,000 liters of oil spilled into the sea when the SMDC-owned MT Solar I tanker sank last August 11. Petron Corporation contracted SMDC to transport 2.2 million liters of oil. The oil spill resulted in a thick sludge that has spread more than 150 kilometers from the sunken ship.

Up to 300 kilometers of shoreline in Guimaras, Iloilo and Negros has been destroyed by the oil spill. It has also damaged more than 15 square kilometers of coral reefs, 60 hectares of seaweed plantations, 1,100 hectares of mangroves, 1,000 hectares of marine reserves including four areas preserved for their eco-diversity, six ports and beach resorts.

More than 4,000 families from

20 barangays in Guimaras and eight barangays in Panay have lost their livelihood, mainly due to the destruction of fishing grounds. More than 740 people have been stricken by various ailments including skin infections, asthma, rhinitis, gastritis and gastroenteritis from directly handling the sludge, inhaling its chemicals and eating contaminated fish and other marine life. The rehabilitation of affected marine areas is estimated to take several decades.

Petron and SMDC's accountability

SMDC and its officials clearly must answer for the oil spill and the damage this has wrought on



the environment and the people's livelihood, as well as for the problems besetting the tanker and the marine laws and regulations violated by the company and ship captain. But it is wrong to say, as the government has been claiming, that Petron has no criminal responsibility for the oil spill. In fact, it is Petron that bears the biggest responsibility for failing to undertake steps to ensure that its oil is transported safely.

In an effort to save on expenses, Petron failed to ensure that the oil tanker it contracted was double-hulled as required by international maritime safety standards. The Philippines has been a signatory since 1993 to an international maritime accord that stipulates that oil tankers must be double-hulled to prevent oil spills should such ships sustain damage to one of their hulls.

Petron's failure to comply with

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9:00 a.m. in Sitio Tacul, Sinapulan, Columbio, Sultan Kudarat. It was the second time the NPA dealt a blow on DRC elements who attempted to enter the same area on July 16 and suffered an undetermined number of dead and wounded.

That same day, Red fighters from Front 74 conducted harassment operations on combined troops of the 27th and 58th IB in Datal Pitak, Colonsabak, Matanao, killing three soldiers.

The VPC said these attacks that dealt losses on the AFP, CAFGU and other armed minions of the reactionary government show the readiness of the NPA in FMSR to frustrate the US-Arroyo regime's all-out war campaign.

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Commercialized education

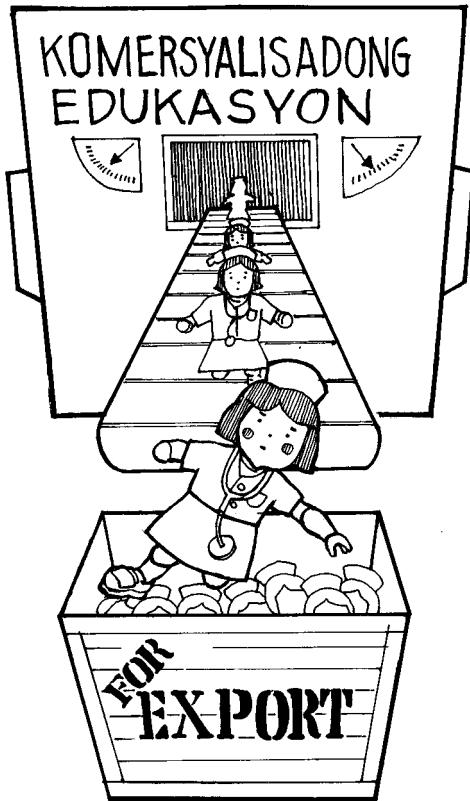
Widespread corruption and the large-scale commercialization of nursing education became a glaring public issue with the exposé of cheating in this year's Nursing Licensure Exams (NLE). Initial reports showed that on the day of the exam, Gapuz Review Center in Baguio distributed to its students papers containing questions and answers exactly like those in the NLE. Up to 2,000 students were immediately involved.

In the next several days came revelations that Inress Review Center had also given some students it had gathered a "final review" that featured questions and answers from the NLE. Inress is owned by then Philippine Nursing Association (PNA) president George Cordero. The PNA assists in preparing the exam and ensuring its integrity. Cordero also owns the country's biggest nursing school,

the Philippine College for Health and Sciences. Both Cordero and the PNA vice president have resigned their posts in shame.

Investigations by the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) and the Senate revealed that even before the exam, answers to the third and fifth questions had already been circulating among

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such standards constitutes grave criminal negligence, considering that it has been raking in huge profits. Petron is one of the three biggest oil companies in the Philippines, earning a ₱6 billion net income last year—its biggest in a decade.

In the face of the enormous damage wrought by the oil spill, Petron's response has come at a snail's pace and is sorely inadequate. It has not allotted any amount to provide immediate assistance and alleviate the conditions of people affected by the tragedy.

The Arroyo regime's culpability

Despite the extensive destruction caused by the oil spill and the cries for help from the local government and the people, it took almost two weeks for the Arroyo regime to form "Task Force Guimaras" to oversee the cleanup of the seas. Before this, local fisher-folk organizations, environmentalist groups and the Philippine Coast Guard had for days been trying to clean up the oil spill as best as they could.

Malacañang has not used government's 40% share in Petron to ensure the allotment of a cleanup fund for oil spills and a rehabilitation fund to compensate the people for the destruction to the environment and their livelihood. In fact, the government even seeks to absolve Petron of its criminal responsibility by say-

ing that if at all, Petron's only liability lies in its having contracted SMDC.

The Guimaras oil spill demonstrates the government's utter lack of preparedness for tragedies of such huge proportions. First, despite its being a signatory to the international convention requiring oil tankers to be double-hulled, it has yet to pass a law calling for compliance with the requirement. Thus, every day a single-hulled oil tanker sails on Philippine seas means a potential oil spill, in violation of the government's own "Clean Water Act" that imposes penalties on marine pollution caused by "willful and grave negligence".

The government has yet to take moves to salvage the sunken tanker or siphon out more than 1.5 million liters of oil still stored inside the ship that continues to leak out, causing damage to the sea. It has yet to address the affected residents' basic needs and has failed to come up with a long-term plan to assist thousands of people victimized by the tragedy who continue to fall ill and go hungry. Arroyo is more interested in covering up the extent of the tragedy that has befallen Guimaras and has thus forbidden even officers of the Philippine Coast Guard from talking directly to media. Coast Guard officials have on several occasions expressed anger over Petron's negligence and aired their sympathy for the plight of those affected by the oil spill.

students at the Gapuz and Inress review centers and in many other review centers. The investigations exposed in quick succession the involvement of high-ranking officials from nursing bodies and review centers who came out looking like leeches feeding on the blood of students and destroying the nursing profession.

Commercialized education

Cheating in the NLE has exposed the decadent and commercialized system of nursing education in the country that has caused untold hardships to students. It is a system that spurns the profession's true spirit of caring for the sick and the needy and is instead used as a milch cow by capitalists and their cohorts in government and private institutions.

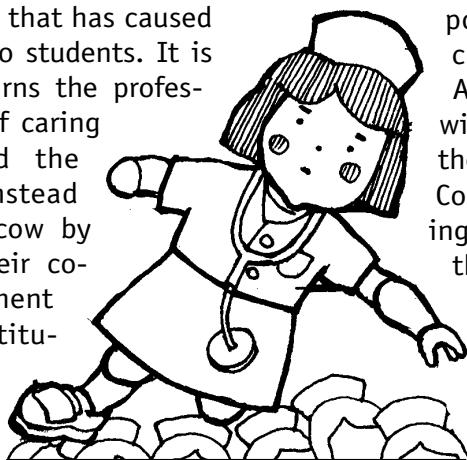
Worse, the labor-export policy drives the majority of nurses and other Filipino professionals to seek jobs abroad and exploits the desperation of tens of thousands of students to find employment overseas.

The commercialization of nursing education has caused the further deterioration of the already low quality of health services in the country. It focuses on producing new graduates to fulfill the international demand for docile nurses willing to accept low wages mainly in the US and other affluent countries. Hundreds of nursing schools have thereby mushroomed, generating unqualified graduates who therefore have to enrol in review centers and are tempted by leaked out NLE questions and answers for

sale.

Since 1999, the number of nursing schools in the Philippines has grown from 186 to 460. Forty percent of them, however, have "0% passing rates" at the NLE. There are likewise 24 schools with less than 8% of its graduates passing the exam. Many of the teachers in these schools are unqualified. Every year, the number of nursing graduates passing the NLE grows smaller.

The reactionary government allows the proliferation of such schools, especially since some of them are owned by politicians and close friends of the Arroyo family. It will be recalled that the entire Technical Committee on Nursing Education under the Commission on Higher Education resigned last July over the Arroyo regime's refusal to close down many



nursing schools found to have failed the standard for educational institutions, especially for nursing and medicine. Out of the country's 460 nursing schools, only 12 are considered by CHEd to have met the standard.

Review centers run by capitalists likewise rake in a lot of money, in cahoots with highly placed government officials. A simple review for the NLE could cost from ₱12,000-16,000 per student, and a review for a qualifying exam for overseas employment ₱20,000-50,000 per student. This is exclusive of examination fees and other exorbitant payments required by the Board of Nursing such as the ₱1,000 fee just for printing the invitation and program for the oath-taking ceremony of new

nurses.

Arroyo's stop-gap measures

All this has earned the ire of nurses and severe criticism from the public. Critics from the health sector have called for the restoration of the dignity of the nursing profession and raising the quality of nursing education and services.

They demand that an independent investigation be immediately conducted to identify and punish the culprits. They call for the removal of government officials involved in the leakage and those responsible for allowing the proliferation of review centers being used as milch cows. Most of all, they assail the commercialization of nursing education and call for strict compliance with set standards for their profession. To erase any doubts on the students involved in the cheating, they demand a retake of the exam's third and fifth parts and for government to defray expenses for this.

The Arroyo regime has thus been compelled to organize a token investigation that has yet to pinpoint the culprits and file the appropriate criminal charges. More than a month has passed with the regime still failing to take any definite measures to identify and punish officials responsible for the leakage and address the deterioration of nursing education. In fact, it has been covering up for the guilty parties and has used EO 464 as an additional obstacle, with Malacañang shielding and preventing PRC officers from attending Senate hearings on the issue and barring other government officials from responding to summons from the senators. Arroyo finally allowed PRC chair Leonor Tripol-Rosario to attend a Senate hearing last September 6 but only because the PRC budget was to be